

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4274
INFO AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL ZAGREB
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
AMEMBASSY ROME

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SHUM, PINT, YO
SUBJECT: PRESS CONFERENCE BY SERBIAN PRESIDENT MARKOVIC

SUMMARY: SERBIAN PRESIDENT DRAGOSLAV MARKOVIC HELD A RELATIVELY
INFORMATIVE PRESS CONFERENCE ON DECEMBER 16 FOR A GROUP OF FOREIGN
JOURNALISTS. FBIS SHOULD HAVE FULL TEXT BUT WE THINK
MARKOVIC'S COMMENTS ON FREEDOM OF TRAVEL, THE BELGRADE
EIGHT, THE COMINFORMIST MILE PEROVIC, THE STATUS OF YUGOSLAVIA'S
TWO AUTONOMOUS PROVINCES AND NATIONALISM ARE WORTH HIGH-
LIGHTING. END SUMMARY.

1. FREEDOM OF TRAVEL. MARKOVIC PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING
STATISTICS ABOUT PASSPORT ISSUANCES IN SERBIA: LAST YEAR IN
SERBIA THERE WERE 368,549 REQUESTS FOR ISSUANCE OR
EXTENSIONS OF PASSPORTS AND IN ONLY ABOUT 6,000 CASES
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WERE THESE REQUESTS DENIED. IN ABOUT 3,000 CASES REFUSAL
WAS BASED ON COURT CHARGES, CRIMINAL RECORDS AND THE
LIKE. IN ABOUT 800 CASES REFUSALS WERE BASED ON REQUESTS
OF VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS BECAUSE OF DEBTS OWED BY THE
APPLICANTS (MOST LIKELY CUSTOMS DUTIES) AND ONLY 85
DECISIONS NOT TO ISSUE WERE MADE AT THE REQUEST OF THE
STATE SECURITY SERVICE. (NOTE: THIS "EXPLANATION", HOWEVER,

STILL LEAVES MORE THAN 2,000 REFUSALS UNACCOUNTED FOR. AS PASSPORTS ARE ISSUED BY MUNICIPAL OFFICES OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS, THESE MAY BE CASES IN WHICH PASSPORTS WERE REFUSED ON SECURITY GROUNDS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL, WITHOUT A FORMAL REQUEST FROM FEDERAL ORGANS OF STATE SECURITY.) MARKOVIC ALSO NOTED THAT AMONG THE 6,000 REFUSALS ONLY 715 COMPLAINTS WERE LODGED. HE CITED THIS AS AN INDICATION THAT MOST PEOPLE WERE AWARE OF THE REASONS THEY CANNOT OBTAIN PASSPORTS.

2. THE BELGRADE EIGHT. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROFESSORS OF THE BELGRADE FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY WHO WERE DISMISSED IN 1974. MARKOVIC NOTED THAT THE YUGOSLAV CONSTITUTIONAL COURT HAD DETERMINED THE DISMISSAL OF THESE PROFESSORS WAS NOT, REPT NOT, UNCONSTITUTIONAL. HE NOTED THAT THEY HAVE BEEN OFFERED POSITIONS IN "SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTES" THAT THEY HAVE NOT ACCEPTED, BUT THEY NEVERTHELESS ARE STILL RECEIVING SALARIES FROM THE EDUCATION SECRETARIAT. HE ADDED THAT THEIR REINSTATEMENT ON THE FACULTY IS FOR THE TIME BEING "OUT OF THE QUESTION".

3. MILE PEROVIC. MARKOVIC INSISTED THAT PEROVIC WAS ARRESTED IN YUGOSLAVIA AND HAD NOT BEEN BROUGHT HERE FROM ANOTHER COUNTRY. HE SAID THE INVESTIGATION WHICH IS IN PROCESS WILL SEEK TO ESTABLISH WHY HE CAME TO YUGOSLAVIA. (NOTE: FRG EMBASSY HAS SHOWN US CLIPPINGS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FROM FRENCH PRESS ABOUT MYSTERIOUS AND SUDDEN DISAPPEARANCE OF PEROVIC FROM HIS HOME IN PARIS AFTER FRENCH AUTHORITIES REFUSED HIM PERMISSION TO REMAIN PERMANENTLY. PEROVIC'S FELLOW COMINFORMIST VLADO DAPCEVIC, NOW IN PRISON IN YUGOSLAVIA, HAS ALWAYS INSISTED HE WAS ABDUCTED FROM ROMANIA, BUT YUGOSLAVS DENY THIS.)

4. STATUS OF AUTONOMOUS PROVINCES. MARKOVIC ESSENTIALLY CONFIRMED THAT THERE HAS BEEN CONTROVERSY ON THE POLITICAL STATUS OF KOSOVO AND VOJVODINA AND THAT SERBIA AND THE PROVINCES DO NOT AGREE ON HOW MUCH AUTONOMY FROM SERBIA THEY SHOULD HAVE. HE STATED THAT THE DUAL STATUS OF THESE TWO PROVINCES --CONSTITUENT PARTS OF SERBIA ON ONE HAND AND ELEMENTS OF THE FEDERATION ON THE OTHER--IS VERY COMPLEX AND THEREFORE IT IS "NATURAL" THAT THERE WOULD BE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION ON HOW THEY SHOULD BE TREATED. WITHOUT INDICATING WHAT DECISION HAS BEEN REACHED MARKOVIC SAID "WE HAVE NOW UNANIMOUSLY COORDINATED THE STANDS OF ALL ELEMENTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA BY ADOPTING A DOCUMENT DETERMINING THE CORRECT EXTENT OF THE QUESTION AND THE METHOD FOR RESOLVING MANY PROBLEMS CONNECTED WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE

CONSTITUTION."

5. NATIONALISM MARKOVIC ALSO DEVOTED SOME TIME TO
ELABORATING ON THE QUESTION OF NATIONAL ISM WITHOUT
SAYING MUCH THAT WAS NEW. HE WAS FRANK IN ADMITTING THAT
NATIONALISM WILL CONTINUE TO BE A THREAT TO YUGOSLAVIA'S
UNITY AND THAT ITS ERADICATION WILL NOT BE ACCOMPLISHED
"TODAY, TOMORROW, OR WITHIN A FORESEEABLE PERIOD OF TIME".
EAGLEBURGER

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